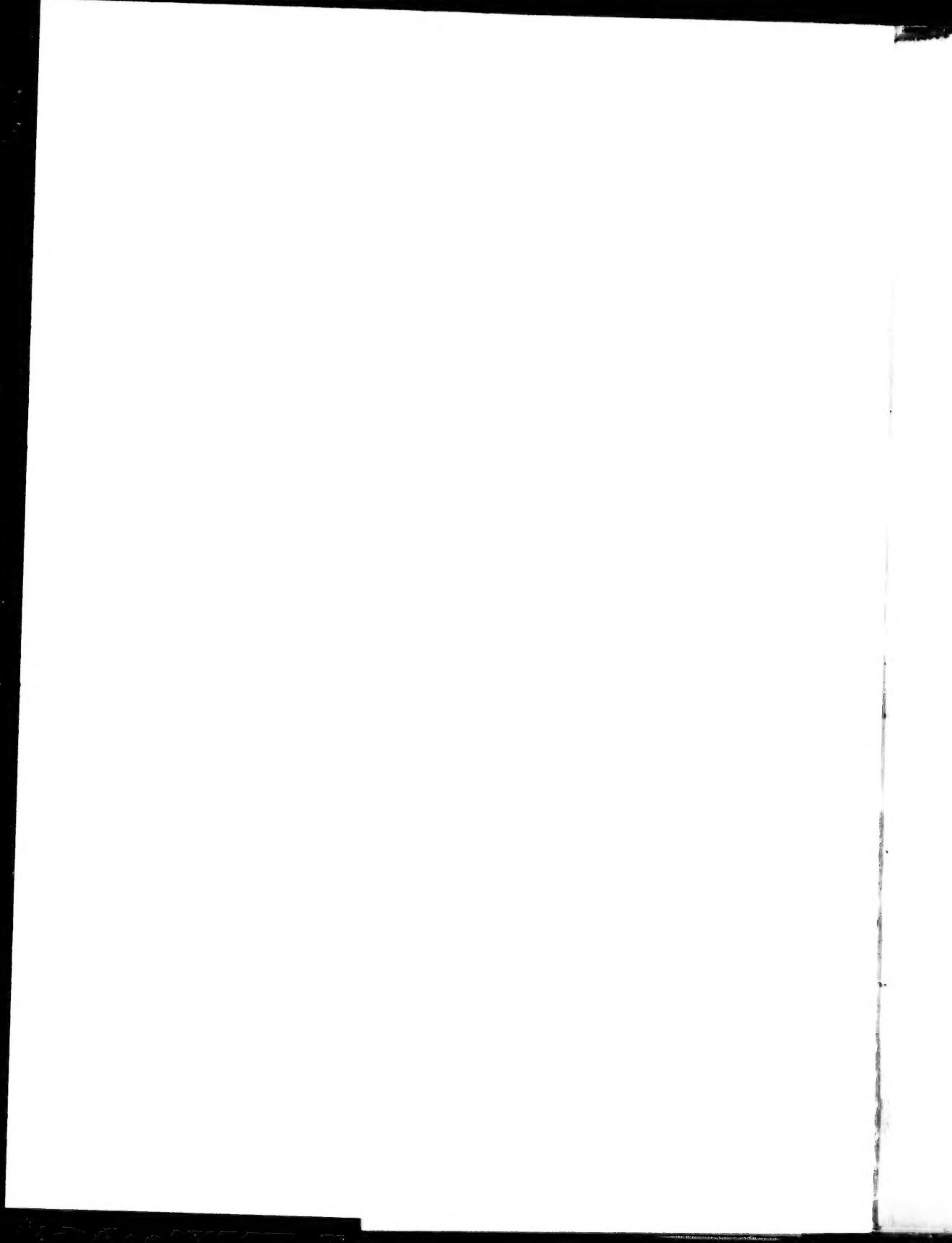




A
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF
SIR N. F. BELLEAU

FROM "HOLD'S JOURNAL," FOR OCTOBER, 1894

BY

HENRY FRY

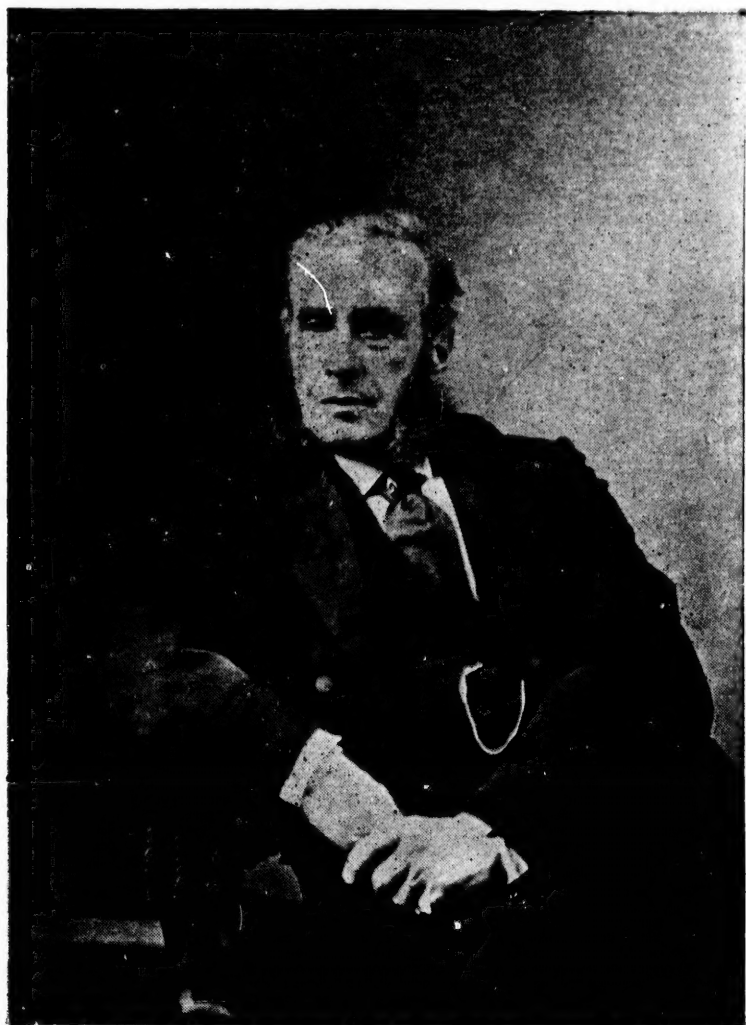
of Sweetsburg, late of Quebec

QUEBEC :
GENERAL PRINTING OFFICE OF A. COTÉ & Co.

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1894







N. F. Belleau
K.B.M.C.

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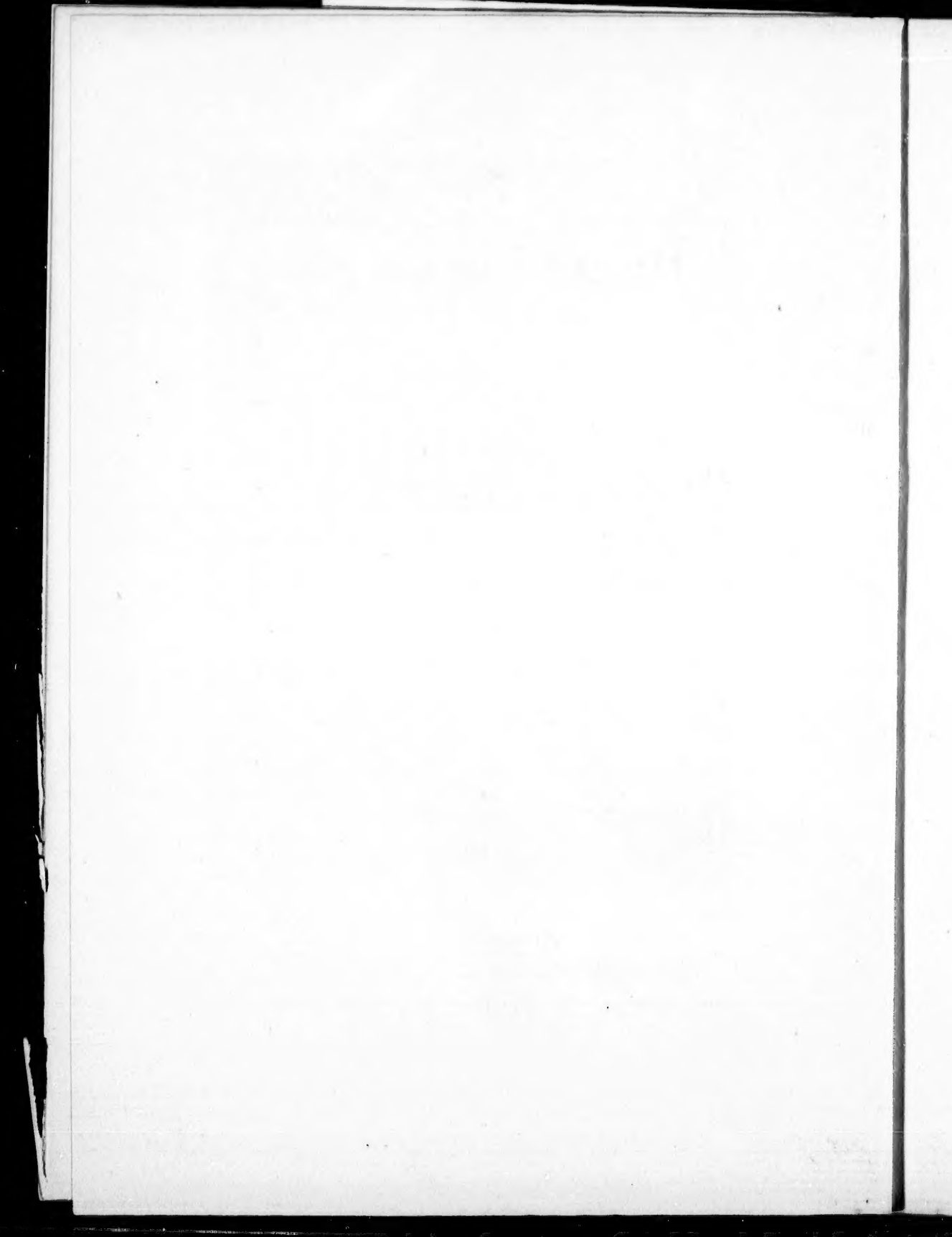
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SIR N. F. BELLEAU



A DISTINGUISHED French Canadian, whose kindly face has been familiar in the streets of Quebec for more than three-fourths of a century, passed peacefully away, full of years and honors, on Friday, the 14th Sep-

tember, 1894, in the person of Sir **Narcisse Fortunat Belleau**, K. C. M. G. His second name was fully justified, by his singularly fortunate career.

For though he was not a statesman, nor a financier, nor a man of marked ability or of wide culture, yet by his high character and genial nature, he attained to some of the highest positions open to British subjects in Canada, and filled them with honor and distinction.

The son of a Sainte - Foi farmer, Gabriel Belleau, by Marie de Kotscha Hamel, his wife, Narcisse was born at Quebec, on the 20th October, 1808, and was thus in his 86th year.

Educated at the Quebec Seminary, he was called to the bar of Lower Canada, in 1832, where he enjoyed a lucrative practice and was elected *bâtonnier* of the district of Quebec, in 1857 and 1858, and was made Q. C. in 1854.

In 1847, he was elected as an alderman of the City, and, in 1850, became Mayor, holding that office for 4 years, during which the Quebec Water-works were built, bringing fresh water from Lake Saint-Charles. In commemoration of the event, his portrait was painted and placed in the City hall, where it may still be seen. He was also, for a time, President of the projected North Shore Railway.

In 1849, he was elected a director of the Quebec Bank, was re-elected for a period of no less than 44 years, retiring only in 1893.

In the same year, he entered the field of politics, contesting unsuccessfully the seat for Portneuf, in the Canadian House of Assembly, against the late Antoine-Juchereau Duchesnay. In October, 1852, however, he was called by Royal Mandamus to the Legislative Council of Canada, and on the 26th November, 1857, was elected Speaker, the duties of which office he continued to discharge until the 1st of August, 1858, when, on the accession of the Brown-Dorion administration to power, he retired. Six days after-

wards, on the resignation of this short-lived Government, he was re-installed in his former office, which he held until the 20th March, 1862. On the 27th of the same month, he was appointed Minister of Agriculture, which position he held until the 20th May following, when the Cartier-Macdonald Government was defeated, and retired. While holding the office of Speaker, the Prince of Wales visited Canada, and, on the 15th August, 1860, M^r Belleau read the Address of the Legislative Council to His Royal Highness. After reading his reply, the Prince, on behalf of the Queen, knighted M^r Belleau, & from that time, he was always spoken of as "Sir Narcisse."

In 1865, Sir Etienne-Pascal Taché, the Premier of the coalition Government, died ; and the Government was seriously embarrassed in selecting a successor. As the two parties in the Government could not agree, Sir Narcisse was eventually chosen as a compromise, he being looked upon as an impartial and non partisan man. The Confederation of the Provinces into the Great Dominion occurred on the 1st July, 1867, when Sir Narcisse was appointed first Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Quebec, an office which he filled for five years with credit and dignity, and, on the completion of his term, declined a seat in the Senate, living thereafter a quiet, unostenta-

tious life, respected by all. In 1879, in the presence of the Marquis of Lorne and the Princess Louise, he was created K. C. M. G.

Sir Narcisse could never get over his early economical habits and, although he had the magnificent domain of Spencer Wood at his disposal, while Lieutenant-Governor, he preferred to reside in his unpretentious house in Saint-Louis street. He thus amassed a considerable fortune, variously estimated at from \$200,000 to \$300,000, and proving what has been so often observed, that fortune oftener results from what a man spends, than from what he earns.

In 1835, he married Marie-Reine-

Josephite, daughter of the late Louis Gauvreau, who was formerly a member of the Legislative Assembly. She died some 10 years ago, childless, and Sir Narcisse has left his fortune to his nephew, M^r A. G. Belleau.

I first met Sir Narcisse when conducting the opposition to a bill in the Legislative Council, empowering the Quebec Harbor Commissioners to impose a tax upon shipping, about 1863, but, in December, 1864, I accepted a seat at the board of the Quebec Bank, and sat with him there for nearly 13 years.

On his appointment as Lieutenant-Governor, in 1867, he arrived from Montreal in the steamboat, and a great

crowd awaited him on the wharf. I was among the crowd and Sir Narcisse selected the late Abraham Hamel, as representing the French, and myself as representing the English, to escort him to his hotel. Shortly after, I was elected President of the Board of Trade, and re-elected for 3 years, so it happened that Sir Narcisse looked upon me as a representative English merchant, and bestowed on me repeated acts of kindness, which I can never forget. I often dined with him at the Stadacona Club, Sainte-Anne street, and on one occasion at Spencer Wood, where I met Prince Arthur, the Governor General (lord Lisgar), General McNeill and the Dominion Cabinet. Always digni-

fied and extremely courteous, there was one feature of his character which I always admired. He persisted in looking on the bright side of human nature, refused to believe in the possibility of any man doing wrong, until convinced by the clearest evidence. He will long be remembered as a kind-hearted, genial specimen of the old French Canadian regime, which, while not displaying the energy or force of the Anglo-Canadian, had many fine qualities which will be looked for in vain amongst the great majority of the modern "go-ahead trading class. "

Sweetsburg, 30th September, 1894.

